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ABSTRACT

How officials and community leaders in Cattaraugus County see and understand the county government and its functions is discussed in this paper. The purpose of the study is to determine the opinions of officials and leaders on the need for more information on county government and major issues, on Cooperative Extension being involved in public affairs educational program efforts, and for Cooperative Extension to develop a comprehensive continuing education program in public affairs. A model of the public problem solving process is presented, with emphasis on the lack of knowledge of the processes of local government by the citizenry. Results of a questionnaire and survey are presented; charts are used to illustrate responses. Using conclusions based on the results of the study, a public affairs program on county government is proposed. A selected bibliography and sample questionnaire are included. (RS)

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A STUDY OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS OPINIONS ON PUBLIC INFORMATION ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN CATTARAUGUS COUNTY, NEW YORK

A Research Report

Presented To

The Department of Extension Education

University of Missouri, Columbia

In Fulfillment of Requirements

For A Research Project, Extension Education 450

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The increasing speed with which technological, economic, social, and political developments are occuring create pressures on the citizens in our country.

This modernization process is occuring in a political democracy where citizens, with the help of their leaders, are expected to decide their individual and collective destinies and how to create social progress. (10)

Of the existing governmental bodies, perhaps the one closest to the citizens which has the most effect on their lives is the county government. With this statement in mind, consider the possibility that the county government is the least understood and has the most diversified structures among counties and states of any government body.

As Gilbertson (12) put it, the county government is the "Dark Continent" of Americal politics. He feels that the American people, although trying to understand political democracy, have neglected to study the county government.

Could it be then, that lack of public participation in community affairs and on issues which involve them is in part related to lack of understanding of county government responsibilities and methods of operation?

County officials, elected or appointed, are under different pressures from many sources in their positions as public servants.

Pressed for time to carry out their duties, they may overlook the possibility that the public they serve does not know exactly how they go about carrying out this service. This could be as true in Cattaraugus County as any other.

The citizens are busy going about the business of living, and also under many pressures, of other kinds perhaps, but still having a profound influence on their lives. Governmental activities are thought of at election time, when taxes are due, or when some problem has arisen in a community. Many citizens are too preoccupied to take time to learn about the vital functions of democracy or the opportunity is not made available for them to learn about their local government.

Education can help improve understanding. This has to be done in such a way as to be effective but not burdensome to either the public (citizen) or the county official. An organization which could carry on this educational program is Cooperative Extension and in this study, more specifically, the Cattaraugus County Cooperative Extension Association. Cooperative Extension, throughout its half century of existance, has proven it can carry on effective educational programs.

There is a need for more county residents, in particular those in Cattaraugus County, to be informed, to understand and participate in county government and its many processes. However, the problem appears to be that there is a lack of knowledge of Cattaraugus County citizens of the purposes and functions of county government. To this county and others we can apply a statement by Rowat (23) who makes this clear:

> Today it is essential that citizens and local officials take an intelligent interest in all aspects of local government. They must know not only what it is, but also why it is here. If they understand this, they are in a position to know its value to them as citizens or as citizen's representatives.

It is the purpose of this paper to work toward fulfilling that goal.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

One of the principles of Community Development is that people should have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and capabilities to bring about desired changes. (11) Applying this to the problem at hand then, the people in a county should have the opportunity to learn more about public decision making through public affairs education, to increase their participation.

The concepts of community resource development and public affairs education should be explained for clarity. Public affairs education is viewed in this paper as being a part of community resource development, thus, no attempt will be made to explain the latter in depth.

Community resource development has no one definition which meets with general acceptance. One that applies to the study being made is: a process of education to change people through their participation in both public and private affairs.

Public affairs education can best be defined by examining in more detail the first two words. Public affairs may be contrasted with private affairs to see the difference. A private affair is when the consequences of an act are confined to the group of individuals who are involved in it. Public affairs occur when the consequences of an act by a person or group of people are extended beyond those directly involved in it, and when there is an effort by others to influence these consequences. (5) To put it in another way, when the consequences of an act are received by others

beyond those immediately concerned it becomes public. (9) If private acts are of such importance they need public control then this becomes public affairs. Economic problems, social problems and political problems may be public affairs problems. The ability to act upon them varies depending on how crucial the issue is, agreement on a course of action and capacity to do something about it. Knowledge of political processes is very important at this stage whether at federal, state or county levels. (5)

Recent changes in governmental structure have occured in Cattaraugus County which may have reduced the knowledge of county government functions and processes. The existing form of government was initiated January 1, 1970. It is a governing body called a legislature, made up of 25 legislators. Previous to this time, the governing body was a Board of Supervisors made up of 49 members. One man represents more people than previously and results in less contact with constituents. More details on the existing county government will be presented later in another section.

There is a need to know more clearly the existing opinions of county leaders and government officials on the current issues. Is there a need for more comprehensive educational opportunities?

Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs education has been clearly spelled out in the Smith-Lever Act. The specific posture is education, however, not policy determination. It is the responsibility of the people themselves to make their own decisions in the public decision-making process. (5)

Importance of people. When one discusses public affairs education

or community development, he is in the final analysis talking about people. It does no good to plan development or education without considering the people who are to be involved.

Social learning approach theory. In this study we are concerned about people in the county becoming more knowledgeable about county government processes and functions. This can be viewed as relating very closely to the social learning approach theory discussed by Zimbardo and Ebbesen. (26) This theory includes three phases of learning, which in this paper, are not used in the strictly social-psychological approach as used by the authors. The three phases include as a first step, determination of the behavioral change that is to occur; then specify what, or the "stuff" people involved have learned previously, and is presently controlling their behavior. Finally, after this information is found, the technique which is most likely to produce a change in the information is applied.

Applying the theory to this research study involves some modification, but appears to provide a logical framework for investigation. The changes in behavior desired include increased participation of citizens in the decision making process through increased knowledge of county government processes, and also, more concern by county officials for public education on these processes. An assessment, therefore, is needed of existing feelings of understanding of county government by county officials and community leaders to determine the extent of the change needed.

The second phase involves an attempt to specify the "stuff" or what people have learned and are presently thinking that is affecting their behavior.

The behavior of a person involved in making public affairs decisions is determined by a large extent by his beliefs and values. Beliefs are a

person's perception of what is, or the facts, and are only changed when he explores new information. The concept of values can be defined as the normative standards by which humans are influenced in making choices of alternatives. (17) Perhaps they could be viewed as what "ought to be" or the goals strived for. Values are very similar in public affairs to interests so that they are the normative standard of what is desirable. The same is true of public interests; that is, they become the normative standard for the public. (5)

The objective then, in this modified social learning approach, is to find the current interests, beliefs of the people involved; in this case, the county officials and community leaders. How do they view the importance and complexity of county government: Do they feel citizen knowledge and participation is adequate or there is a need for clarification of ideas, issues and organization? Is public affairs education an acceptable role for Cooperative Extension in their view?

Perhaps more important, what are the characteristics of the individuals which affect their actions as community leaders and county officials? The location in the county, especially rural or urban will be examined, and educational attainment level of each individual will be determined.

Effects of residence in participation in public affairs programs was examined by Harp and Cummings in New York in a 1968 study. (15) Results showed that highest percentage of participants in a public affairs program were from farm or open country. The same study also showed little difference of educational attainment level between rural or urban, but that those with a higher level will express stronger interests. The positive effects of educational attainment level were further supported

by Clark and Timothy (4) in a study of rural community residents' attitudes, concluding that the higher the educational level of the respondent, the more favorable his feeling toward the issue that was studied.

Other aspects, such as whether an individual is a community leader or county official and elected or appointed may have an effect on the interests and beliefs of the individuals.

The study by Clark and Timothy already mentioned showed the effect of perception of government's role in a public issue. One of the findings was that the more the individual perceived government's role as legitimate, the more favorable his attitude. The view of government as seen by county officials, whether elected or appointed, and community leaders, may have an effect on their beliefs and interests of public knowledge of county government and Cooperative Extension's role in the author's study.

The final step in the social learning approach is that of finding the technique which is most likely to produce a change in the information and is then applied. This becomes the important part of this study, which will deal with analyzing the data collected from the county officials and community leaders for pertinent characteristics or behavior. The conclusion and implications may give clues for techniques in public affairs programming which will increase effectiveness in influencing interests in participation in county government educational programs for Cattaraugus County.

The previous discussion leads us to forming some questions and hypothesis.

General researchable question. What are the opinions of county

officials and community leaders on public information of county government and Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs in Cattaraugus County?

Specific research questions.

1. Are the opinions of county officials and community leaders on public information on county government influenced by their residence in the county, educational attainment level, whether community leader or county official, and whether elected or appointed?

2. Are the opinions of county officials and community leaders on Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs influenced by the residence in the county, educational attainment level, whether community leader or county official, and whether elected or appointed?

General hypothesis. The degree of interest in educational information on county government and Cooperative Extension involvement expressed by county officials and community leaders will be influenced by their residence, educational level, whether county officials or community leaders, and whether elected or appointed.

Specific hypothesis.

1. A higher degree of interest in public knowledge of county government will be expressed by respondents from urban areas, community leaders, appointed officials and respondents with a higher educational attainment level.

2. A higher degree of support for Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs will be expressed by respondents from rural areas, community leaders, appointed officials and respondents with a higher educational level.

Definitions. To be sure terminology being used in this study is clear, the concepts and definitions of terms used will be explained.

County Officials - This term is used to include both elected officials (legislators) and appointed officials (department heads).

Legislators - Twenty five officials elected for a two year term from the election districts in the county.

Department Head - An appointed official who has responsibility for carrying out one of the functions of county government.

Election District - Ten election districts exist in Cattaraugus County based on one legislator representing 1/25 of the county population.

County Government - A term used to include the legislators, department heads, other personnel and all the agencies and offices that are involved in carrying on county operations and services.

Community Leaders - Individuals representing the major segments in the county (other than county government): education, agriculture, industry, credit, religion, retailing, private business, professionals, local government (town or municipal).

Extension Involvement - The assistance in organizing, planning and carrying out a public affairs program by Cooperative Extension staff and leadership.

Residence - Location of individual's home, whether rural or urban. Rural residence is defined as that other than the Olean and Salamanca urban areas.

Educational Level - The formal academic training of the individual. This was measured in terms of elementary, high school, college and post-college.

Limitations

This study, conducted during December 1971 represents responses from the community leaders and county officials of Cattaraugus County at one point in time.

It is an attempt to measure opinions and attitudes which are difficult to measure. Large differences were not evident between the groups compared.

Personal biases could be injected into results, especially in open ended questions without safeguards. Other graduate students and university professors served as judges to minimize the effect of this danger.

The study is focused in one county with its own peculiar problems, form of government and public issues. The results are therefore appropriate only to Cattaraugus County and during the time it was conducted.

Justification

1. Research is needed to determine if county officials and community leaders throughout the county feel there is a lack of knowledge of government processes in Cattaraugus County.

2. This research should help identify specific approaches to developing a comprehensive continuing educational program for the public on county government.

3. Very little research has been done to determine if lack of knowledge of county government processes leads to lack of citizen participation.

4. It is logical for an educational program to be done at the county level of government by a county organization since it is closer

to the situation and more rapid adjustments can be made in program.

5. The research may have implications for other counties in New York State which suffer from a lack of citizen participation in the political decision making process.

Purpose of Study

1. To determine the opinions of community leaders and county officials on the need for more information on county government for the county citizens and major issues of public concern.

2. To determine the opinions of county officials and community leaders on Cooperative Extension being involved in public affairs educational program efforts.

3. To use the findings for Cooperative Extension to develop a comprehensive continuing educational program jointly with the county officials and community leaders.

CHAPTER II

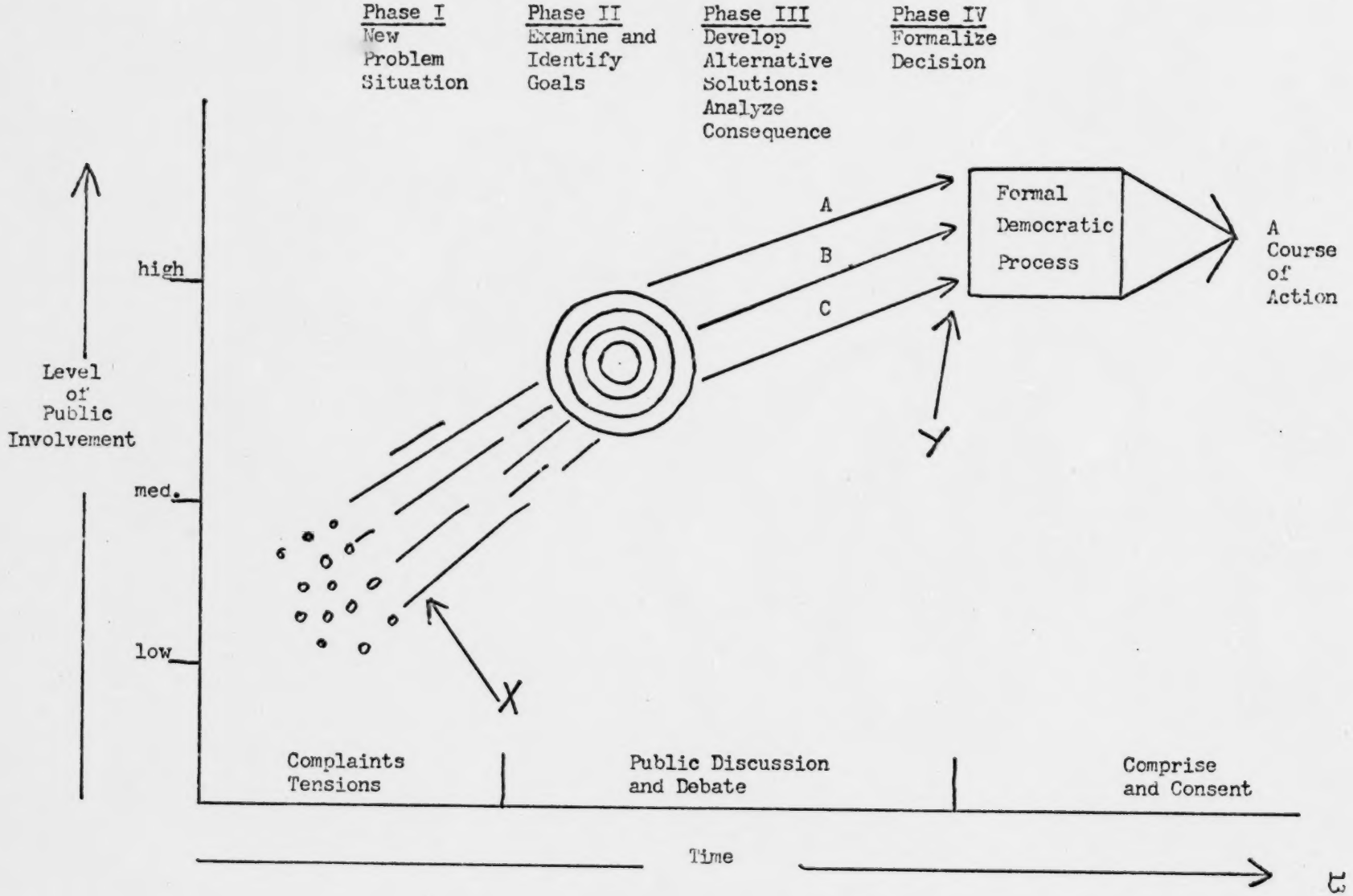
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are many apparent causes of citizens not participating in the political process. There also are many reasons why local government officials may possibly contribute to this problem. We will examine these, select what appears to be a major contributing factor for further study, and then explain why Cooperative Extension should be involved in this important problem.

The problem location can be viewed in a model of the public problem solving process, Figure 1, found in a report on Cooperative Extension policy. (5)

The model shows public involvement increasing with time through the democratic process. This requires the knowledge of when to be involved and how the political process works. The author believes that if the proper knowledge is lacking either at points X or Y, there is no access to the process and the result is more tension, complaints, or apathy. Point X is the time where people might consider forming committees, or seeking out the proper office for answers to a particular issue. Assuming this phase is completed, they may form committees or obtain information. Then the committees or individuals will make their feelings known in a more formal way, at point Y, for decision making. But, if the proper political process is not known at either points X or Y, or if timing has been wrong; frustration results. To better understand what factors affect the knowledge available at points X and Y an examination of the pressures affecting citizens and

Figure 1. PUBLIC PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS



government is needed.

Apparent Causes of Lack of Citizen Participation

Studies of political participation have indicated that, in general, about one quarter of the eligible adults do not even vote, another fifty percent only vote, and very few actually become actively involved in campaigns, debates, letters, etc. Some of the reasons behind these depressing facts are that the average citizens are more involved with their families and friends than with the entire community, more concerned with immediate short run personal problems than with long range community problems, and think in terms of concrete specific details instead of abstract concerns of political and community affairs. (14)

Another consideration is the population of the area, their beliefs about the political system, and how highly they value their responsibilities as citizens. Mobile populations may be less participative since they may not be located in a given area long enough to learn the system. Other considerations are the political structure or lack of leadership which could contribute to lack of participation.

The area the author would like to explore is the possibility of the lack of knowledge on the part of the citizen of the actual processes of local government, and in this study, the county government of Cattaraugus County. The actual workings of county government, as stated previously, are complex and vague. The departments within each county government can number quite high, Cattaraugus County having thirty-one. The functions of each department vary and a person may not need to know everything about all of them, but should know enough to be able to be involved in the decision making process. This is one of the most important aspects of community development; that those affected by a decision have

a voice in it. (22)

The elected representatives (from districts in Cattaraugus County are called legislators) need to assure good understanding on the part of the public of how they function, how public issues are dealt with and when the public can participate.

Part of the problem is also the apparent lack of educating youth on their own county government. They are demanding a greater voice in determining the conditions that influence them. We should provide opportunities for students to secure insight into the operations and structure of their county government.

The citizens may not be aware of what government has done simply because it has not been reported to them. This, and the other considerations mentioned, all contribute to the lack of knowledge of the process which influences points X and Y in the model.

Pressure on county government. The people that occupy positions in county government are under stress from many directions and of different intensities.

1. Pressures from outside. The federal government and its agencies are involved in pressure on county government, but not to the extent of the state level. The pressures are felt locally in three areas; federal aid programs, joint federal-local programs and special federal interests. These usually mean local matching funds and considerable reporting.

State government and its agencies exert pressure in the form of carrying out many state functions, adequate records, adequate funding of joint programs, and maintaining local services. The effect of state legislation has been to reduce the portion of local expenditures over which the county officials have effective control. (8)

This creates additional pressure from local sources such as special districts (fire or water), taxpayers, or special interest groups. An example of a special interest group in Cattaraugus County is one that was formed to ask the legislature to oppose the installation of a dam in the county. If this type of group is not allowed access at the county level to decision making, it is almost impossible for it to gain access at the state or national level.

The voter or constituent concerns can be viewed as pressure since they have certain expectations of their representative. The pressures are exerted in the form of demands for economy, good services, efficiency, and impartiality.

2. Pressure from inside. Most of the essential record keeping of this society is done at the local level; a tremendous responsibility. Political parties and their pressure tactics create difficulties. To the legislator this is only part-time work, since they have regular full time jobs elsewhere.

The employees who are employed by county government are becoming more vocal and causing more time to be spent in dealing with personnel relations. (8)

Within departments there is pressure for funds, reports and possibly even some confusion which add to the problem. There is also in some areas, the trend for reorganizing the structure of county government (13) which creates extra work for studies, and apprehension. Eventually, this may be a partial answer to the problem, but will take time. One study (25) showed that the majority of county board members in a rural area are opposed to reform, but their attitudes were such that they could be changed.

3. Recognition of the need. These pressures from within and without effect the activities of the county government officials. Some are concerned, however, about the lack of participation of citizens. In a case study by Kyd (18) of Missouri State Legislators, he found that only about twelve percent of the respondents believed their constituents had a good understanding of government. All the legislators were concerned about this and felt there was a lack of means to keep the public thoroughly informed, although better use of mass media might improve the situation.

A concern which becomes obvious when one reviews discussion of the "New County" (21) or newer forms of county government (7) is the lack of consideration for a public information or educational phase of the governmental structure. Bromage (3) in 1933 believed that reform was narrowing the gap between county government and the general public, however, it still exists today. Undoubtedly, some changes in government structure will help to narrow this gap, but the fact is, people need to be involved in the process now.

Evidence of county official concern for the problem shows up in county annual reports, where the officials feel they need to report to taxpayers for complete understanding of legislative problems (20), and held conferences on ways of improving communications between government and citizens. (19) One county in New York has held a County Government Week for about eight years in an effort to combat the lack of public understanding. (16) It appears that this interest has grown since 1923 when a study of local governments near Chicago showed 58 percent of them did no reporting of activities at all to the public or anyone else. (2)

Good communication of citizen goals to government and government's

goals to citizens is stressed in a new program on local government in Missouri. (1)

Points X and Y can be most directly affected by county government concern for education at those points.

The Role of Land Grant Universities and Cooperative Extension in Public Affairs

The land grant university. The land grant university has a responsibility to help all people, rural and urban alike, to provide scientific facts and principles for solution of their social and economic problems. To fulfill its responsibilities it will be necessary to expand its efforts in research and Extension. (5)

Cooperative Extension. There is no question of Cooperative Extension's responsibility for public affairs educational programs. It is stated in the Smith-Lever Act and reinforced by the insistant demands of people for help in solving public problems. (5) It is what Extension should be doing, as implied by Kerker. (16) A report on the scope of Extension work clarifies the role as that of better equipping the people it serves through education to analyze public issues on the basis of scientific facts and principles and enable them to make their own decisions on these issues. (5) In 1968, another study report recommended that Cooperative Extension should double its programs in public affairs education. (6)

County Cooperative Extension. The lowest level of Cooperative Extension is at the county level. It is closest to the county problems, can make changes more quickly, and, as pointed out in a recent study, the local office should be a place where the individual citizen can obtain information about programs and services of government at all levels. (6)

Summary

1. Lack of participation of citizens in the county political process is at least partially due to lack of knowledge concerning the the process and functions of county government.

2. County government officials, elected and appointed, are under pressure from many directions so public information programs may not be carried on at a high level.

3. Land grant universities and Cooperative Extension have responsibility for providing assistance at the local level with public programs through public affairs education.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

Background for Design - Cattaraugus County Situation

1. Government changes. Since county government became an entity in 1817 until recently it has been structured on a township basis. The governing body of the county was called the Board of Supervisors, made up of one representative from each township and from each ward in the two cities, Salamanca and Olean, forty-nine total.

On January 1, 1970 a change was made to a legislature form of government based on the one man, one vote requirement. The government then became known as the Cattaraugus County Legislature. The county was divided into districts, with each district representing one-twenty-fifth of the total population and legislators elected from each of the districts to serve on the legislature. The number of legislators is twenty-five. They are paid only a small amount of money and therefore have other employment. School teachers, real estate salesmen, businessmen are examples of some of the legislators other job responsibilities.

Currently the legislature is studying the possibility of another government change - to a county charter possibly.

2. Economic interests. Since Cattaraugus County is the fourth largest in New York State, it is natural for some differences in economic interests, particularly rural and urban, to develop. It is primarily a rural county but about one-half the population lives in the two urban areas, Salamanca and Olean. Agricultural industry is large, about $24,000,000,

and the recreation business opportunities are growing. This is because of the closeness to Buffalo, with large numbers of people wanting "fresh air," and the availability of open land for development.

3. Basis of study. Because of the recent changes in government and increased importance of knowing government processes and the existing rural-urban differences it is important to know the current thinking of decision-making people. The community leaders and county officials form the basis for the population to be studied.

Details of Design

This type of study has now been done before in Cattaraugus County to the author's knowledge. It could be useful in developing a nucleus of people for public affairs education planning.

General procedures

1. Literature was reviewed relating to county government, public affairs education and citizen participation. This included past studies (ERIC) and dissertations, Adult Leadership Journals, Adult Education Journals, Cooperative Extension Journals, and other pertinent readings.

2. Interviews with professors in Community Development, Extension Education, and Sociology at the University of Missouri. In addition, consultations were held with field staff in the new local government positions in Missouri.

3. Approval was obtained from department advisor before conducting study.

4. Proposal was legitimized with the Cattaraugus County Legislature Chairman, County Auditor and President of the New York State County Officer's Association.

The sample. For the purposes of this study a purposive sample was used. There are pitfalls when using a sampling procedure such as this. The most obvious one is that it could be biased. There is also the possibility that the sample picked may not be typical of the population.

However, with good judgement and appropriate strategy, one can choose those to be included in the sample and thus develop samples that are satisfactory to the needs in the study. Typical representatives of the categories should be picked. (24)

The author's reasons for using this sampling procedure were economy, convenience, and practicability. It would be beyond available resources to include the entire county or state population. The important decisions made will be influenced strongly by the county officials and community leaders. It is with these groups of people that the author is concerned in this study and in studying the relationship among the variables of these people.

The primary sample included the entire population of twenty-five county legislators; seventeen of whom responded, and twenty-seven county department personnel; with nineteen responding. The seventy-three community leaders were representatives of various county-wide organizations such as Cancer Society and Dairyman's League; volunteer groups such as League of Women Voters and service clubs; local governments; mass media; businessmen; professionals and influentials. The addition of these made the total sample one hundred twenty-five. Fifty-six community leaders returned questionnaires. Ninety-two usable questionnaires were received, one not usable, one too late for the tabulation, for a total of ninety-four - a seventy-four percent return.

An attempt was made to obtain nearly equal representation of

rural and urban interests for comparison purposes, with sixty-two rural and sixty-three urban potential respondents. Fifty-five rural and thirty-seven urban returned questionnaires.

The questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study contains these main areas for study:

1. County government and public understanding.
   a. Importance of county government.
   b. Degree of complexity.
   c. Public participation in, and knowledge of, county government.
2. Attitudes toward public knowledge of county government.
3. Feelings toward Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs.
4. Characteristics of the respondent.

Pretesting was done to help assure validity and minimize possibilities of misinterpretation of questions and directions in the questionnaire.

The pretests were done in Niagara County, New York, and in Boone County, Missouri, with respondents who were representative of the study population; that is, county officials and community leaders. Other graduate students and college professors at the University of Missouri also participated in the questionnaire development.

The mail survey. The questionnaire was mailed to the respondents due to limited time and finances available. It is recognized that there are some reservations to using a mail questionnaire. The people who respond may not be representative of the groups that the questionnaire was sent to, response level is usually low, there is the chance of misrepresentation or omission of items, and it is impersonal. (24)

In spite of these disadvantages and more, the author used this method since more people could be surveyed in a shorter period of time with little extra help.

The procedure for mailing included mental-set letter, letter of transmittal, the questionnaire, a return envelope (self-addressed and stamped), a post card to indicate interest in receiving a copy of the report of the study, and a follow-up letter mailed shortly after the deadline. (See Appendixes A,B,C, and D.)

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The data in this section are summarized in four major categories: "Importance and Complexity of County Government," "Public Knowledge of County Government," "Extension Involvement in Public Affairs," and "Respondent Characteristics."

On questions where differences might have been evident, the respondents were grouped according to residence (rural or urban), as community leaders or county officials, elected or appointed, and by educational attainment levels (high school, some college, college graduate or higher). Tables are used to illustrate some of the more interesting findings.

The number of respondents for each group is indicated by N and percentages responding to each item are the numbers used to represent differences. Unless otherwise indicated, omits are represented by percentages of the N also.

Importance and Complexity of County Government

All of the county officials responding and ninety-five percent of the community leaders agree that county government is as important as twenty-five years ago. Both groups also agree that the problems faced by county government are more difficult to cope with than in the past, with ninety-seven percent of the community leaders and one hundred percent of the county officials indicating agreement on this point.

Table 1 shows a break down of the problems mentioned by respondents that are more difficult to cope with. Welfare, sewage

and waste disposal, and obtaining resources to meet the demands for services ranked one, two, three respectively. An interesting contrast occurs between elected and appointed officials on sewage and waste disposal with nearly one-third of the elected indicating it is a problem and none of the appointed so indicating.

Table 1

Problems More Difficult for County Government Today

Problems	Rural (N=55)	Urban (N=37)	Community Leaders (N=56)	County Officials (N=36)	Elected (N=37)	Appointed (N=15)	Total (N=92)
			Percent				
Welfare	50	52	54	48	44	62	51
Sewage & Waste	20	19	16	23	32	0	18
Resources	9	15	11	12	12	6	11
Taxes	6	6	6	6	6	8	6
Unemployment	7	0	4	6	6	8	5
Highway	5	4	4	6	0	14	5
Drugs	3	4	6	0	0	0	4

Training for new officials. Table 2 illustrates whether it would be helpful for newly elected or appointed officials to receive training for their duties. Eighty-four percent of the community leaders and seventy-five percent of the county officials indicated that it would be helpful. Within the county officials, however, seventy-three percent of the elected and eighty-seven percent of the appointed thought training would be helpful. Also interesting was twenty-four percent of the elected and only seven percent of the appointed were undecided, possibly indicating

some uncertainty by elected officials as to the value of such training.

Table 2

Training as Being Helpful for New Officials

Response	Community Leaders		County Officials		Elected		Appointed		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	47	84	27	75	27	73	13	86	74	80
No	2	4	2	6	1	3	1	7	3	4
Undecided	7	13	7	19	9	24	1	7	15	15
Total	56	100	36	100	37	100	15	100	92	100

Restriction of tax base. This question is concerned with whether federal and state governments have unduly restricted the tax base in the county. The results show the largest percentage of community leaders (forty-three) were undecided, while forty-two percent of the county officials feel that the tax base was restricted. The totals indicate nearly as many undecided as in the affirmative, inferring no definite conclusion can be drawn on this point.

Only one-third of the respondents made comments concerning the tax base restriction with most indicating that the federal and state governments "used up" the tax base and had too much "tax exempt property".

Home rule. Table 3 shows that eighty percent of the respondents indicated that county government should have greater home rule powers. Comparing community leaders with county officials showed seventy-seven percent for the leaders and eighty-six percent for the officials, indicating a trend that those in government may feel more strongly that they should have more home rule power.

Table 3

Should County Have Greater Home Rule Powers

Response	Community Leaders No.	%	County Officials No.	%	Elected No.	%	Appointed No.	%	Total No.	%
Yes	45	78	31	86	29	78	13	87	74	81
No	5	11	3	8	6	16	1	7	9	10
Undecided	5	11	2	6	2	5	1	7	8	9
Total	55	100	36	100	37	100	15	100	91	100

Chi-Square test showed no significant differences.

Personnel knowledge of county departments. The first question of two in this section, Table 4, deals with the knowledge of purposes and functions of various county departments by the personnel who work in these departments. Three-fourths of the respondents felt the county personnel were "moderately" or "ill-informed". A highly significant difference was found between community leaders and officials with a higher proportion of the community leaders indicating the department personnel were "moderately" to "ill-informed". Appointed officials tended to feel department personnel were more uninformed than did the elected officials.

The second question displayed in Table 5 concerned feelings of how well informed county legislators are of county departments functions. Eighty-three percent of all respondents felt legislators were "moderately" to "uninformed" on county departments. A significant difference was found again between community leaders and county officials. A higher proportion of the county officials (including the legislators themselves) indicated "moderately" to "uninformed" than did the community leaders. The appointed officials tended to feel that legislators were more uninformed than did the elected officials.

Table 4

County Government Personnel Knowledge
of County Departments

Response	Community Leaders No.	%	County Officials No.	%	Elected No.	%	Appointed No.	%	Total No.	%
Very Well Informed	1	3	3	9	2	6	1	8	4	5
Well Informed	8	15	8	22	9	25	2	14	16	18
Mod. Informed	38	68	19	54	22	63	8	57	57	63
Ill Informed	7	14	5	5	2	6	3	21	12	14
Total	54	100	35	100	35	100	14	100	89	100

Chi-square highly significant at .01 probability level between community leaders and county officials.

Table 5

County Legislators Knowledge
of County Departments

Response	Community Leaders No.	%	County Officials No.	%	Elected No.	%	Appointed No.	%	Total No.	%
Very Well Informed	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Well Informed	10	18	4	11	9	24	1	7	14	15
Mod. Informed	36	64	19	53	17	46	9	60	55	60
Ill Informed	7	13	11	31	8	22	5	33	18	20
Uninformed	1	2	2	6	3	8	0	0	3	3
Total	56	100	36	100	37	100	15	100	92	100

Chi-square significant at the .05 probability level between community leaders and county officials.

When comparing the two questions together the community leaders felt that both county personnel and legislators tend to be uninformed on department functions while the county officials indicated that legislators tend to lack this knowledge more than the county personnel.

To determine differences in degree of attitudes and interests on the importance of county government as expressed by the respondents, weights were assigned to questions one to seven. Answers indicating a positive feeling received the most weight.

Table 6 shows that a high proportion of respondents perceive county government as important and complex. A slightly stronger feeling of this importance was reflected by the respondents who were urban, county officials and appointed officials, although no significant differences occured between these groups.

Table 6

How Respondents View the Importance of County Government

Scores of Questions 1 through 7 Range: Total Score=3 to 23. Mean=.43 to 3.29.	
Group	Mean Score
Rural N=54	2.44
Urban N=37	2.50
Community Leader N=55	2.44
County Official N=36	2.49
Elected N=37	2.43
Appointed N=15	2.53
High School N=28	2.43
Some College N=20	2.48
College Graduate N=40	2.46
All Respondents N=91	2.46

T-test showed no significant differences.

Public Knowledge of County Government

Citizen knowledge of problems. Strong agreement of all groupings of respondents was obtained in regard to local citizens degree of knowledge on problems faced by county government. Ninety-eight percent indicated citizens were "moderately" to "uninformed" with two-thirds of these in the "ill" or "uninformed" categories.

Importance of citizen being informed. A similar agreement occurred on the importance of local citizens being well informed on the operation of county government with ninety-nine percent in the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories and sixty percent strongly agreeing.

Officials views of citizen participation. Table 7 contains responses to two questions concerning how elected and appointed officials view more participation of local citizens in public affairs. Seventy percent of the county officials feel elected officials want more participation compared to only forty-three percent of the community leaders. This was a significant difference. Sixty percent of the elected and appointed officials agreed that elected officials do want more citizen participation.

However, when answering in relation to appointed officials wanting more participation of citizens, only twenty-two percent of the elected officials agreed and three-fourths were undecided or disagreed. The appointed officials supported their views with over half indicating they agreed to wanting more participation. No significant differences were found, however, the elected officials tended to disagree with this statement more than the appointed officials.

It is interesting to note also that over one-third of the community leaders implied that both elected and appointed officials apparently do not want more participation of citizens.

Table 7

Respondents Perceptions on How Elected and Appointed Officials Feel About Wanting More Citizen Participation in Public Affairs

Response	Community Leaders No.	%	County Officials No.	%	Elected No.	%	Appointed No.	%	Total No.	%
Elected										
Strongly Agree	6	11	6	17	6	16	1	7	12	13
Agree	18	32	19	53	16	44	8	53	37	41
Undecided	11	21	6	16	6	17	4	27	17	19
Disagree	18	32	5	14	7	20	2	13	23	25
Strongly Disagree	2	4	0	0	1	3	0	0	2	2
Total	55	100	36	100	36	100	15	100	91	100

Chi-square significant at .05 probability level between community leaders and county officials.

Appointed										
Strongly Agree	2	4	1	3	1	3	1	7	3	3
Agree	17	30	12	33	7	20	7	47	29	32
Undecided	16	30	17	47	17	47	5	33	33	37
Disagree	18	32	5	14	9	25	2	13	23	25
Strongly Disagree	2	4	1	3	2	5	0	0	3	3
Total	55	100	36	100	36	100	15	100	91	100

Chi-square showed no significant difference.

Citizen knowledge of county departments. Ninety percent of all respondents indicated disagreement with the statement that local citizens had an adequate knowledge of the various county departments operations.

Informed citizen support. When asked if the citizens were adequately informed on problems faced by county government, would they support efforts to solve these problems, eighty-eight percent of the respondents agreed and one-quarter of these strongly agreed in all groupings inferring a need to better inform citizens.

Table 8 shows rankings of areas least and best understood as indicated by the respondents. The first three items in order for least understood are welfare, finances, and county legislature, and the rankings for best understood are highway, sheriff, and welfare departments. The percentage of omissions is interesting, showing twenty-seven percent for "least" and forty-six percent for "best" understood. This infers that it was easier to name the least understood items and nearly half couldn't think of any that were best understood or at least, they did not name any.

Table 8

Areas of County Government Least and Best Understood

Least Understood			Best Understood		
Area	no.	%	Area	no.	%
Welfare	34	37	Highway	15	16
Finances	11	12	Sheriff	10	11
Co. Legislature	9	10	Welfare	7	8
Assessment	3	3	Co. Leg.	6	7
Planning	3	3	Clerk	3	3
Tax Rate	3	3	Finances	3	3
Health	2	2	Elections	3	3
Clerk	1	1	Health	2	2
Judicial	1	1	Veterans	1	1
Omits	25	27	Omits	42	46
Totals	92	100	Totals	92	100

Major issues facing county government. Several differences in perception of the major issues facing county government occured between the groupings of respondents as shown in Table 9. The rankings listed were obtained from the percentages of respondents indicating each choice. The rural-urban comparison shows the top three choices are the same only in different order with welfare number one for urban and number three for rural, the latter group indicating expanding costs as the number one issue. Community leaders' responses placed welfare as number one and expanding costs as number three, while county officials' responses resulted in a reverse of these placings. The educational groupings show the college graduates tended to name expanding costs, administration problems, and welfare more often than did the high school level. The total figures resulted in the top four named most often as being common to nearly all groupings.

Participation in programs. Three-fourths of all respondents indicated a willingness to participate in a public information program on county government with eighty-one percent of the county officials indicating in the affirmative. One-third preferred day meetings and one-fourth, evening meetings. One-sixth indicated support for mass media efforts.

Public knowledge of county government. Questions in this section and Part I of question 23 were grouped together and weighted as described previously, to obtain a reading on the degree of feeling (attitude) toward public knowledge of county government. Table 10, page 36, shows that a very slight stronger feeling was expressed by those from urban areas, the county officials, elected officials and those with the lowest educational level. No significant differences between groups were found. The hypothesis that a higher degree of interest in public knowledge of county

Table 9

Respondents Views of Major Issues
Facing County Government

Issue	Ranking By Groups (obtained from percent responses)									
	Total	Rural	Urban	Community Leaders	County Officials	Elected	Appointed	High School	College	College Graduate
Expanding Costs	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	4	1	2
Welfare	2	3	1	1	3	3	3	2	3	1
Taxes	3	2	3	2	4	2	4	1	2	5
Administration	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	5	4	3
Home Rule	5	5	6	5	5	5	-	7	5	4
Ecology	6	6	7	6	7	6	5	3	-	-
Waste Disposal	7	7	5	7	6	7	-	6	-	6

Others named include: "urbanization," "employment" and "duplication" accounted for only four percent of the responses. Five respondents did not answer. The dash (-) indicates that item was not named by that group.

government will be expressed by respondents from urban areas, community leaders, appointed officials and those with higher educational levels, is not supported. The significant point is that all groups expressed a significantly positive attitude toward county government being better understood by the public.

Table 10

How Respondents View Public Knowledge of County Government

Scores of Questions: 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 23 Part I
Range: Total Score=16 to 82 Mean=.94 to 4.82

Group	Mean Score
Rural N=54	3.76
Urban N=37	3.78
Community Leader N=55	3.74
County Official N=36	3.82
Elected N=37	3.79
Appointed N=15	3.76
High School N=28	3.84
Some College N=20	3.74
College Graduate N=40	3.74
All Respondents N=91	3.77

T-test showed no significant differences.

Extension Involvement in Public Affairs

Thirty-seven percent of all respondents had taken part in a public affairs workshop or course conducted by Cornell University. One-fourth of these had done so in Cattaraugus County. Sixty-seven percent of the appointed officials had participated in some activity and eighty-six

percent of the elected officials had not done so.

Cooperative Extension knowledge. Five out of ten responses were "moderately informed" of Cooperative Extension's purposes and functions and three out of ten felt they were "well" or "very well informed."

Cooperative Extension help in organizing programs. Eighty-seven percent of all respondents indicated agreement that having Cooperative Extension help to organize efforts of county government or civic groups on a continuing educational program on county government would be helpful for citizens, over one-third strongly agreed. The highest degree of support was expressed by appointed officials while more uncertainty was shown by elected officials, with nineteen percent undecided.

Priority issues. Issues on which Extension might provide educational information are shown in Table 11. The priorities were determined by counting the number of times each item was indicated as high (1), medium (2), and low (3) priority. The totals were obtained by adding the number of times each item was ranked for each category by each of the groupings. There was little difference in the high and low priorities among groups, but there was some overlap in the medium priority as might be expected. Welfare was consistantly high priority and family and child relationships and doctor shortage were most often in the low priority. One difference worth noting between rural and urban priorities is that environmental quality was highest priority in rural responses and welfare highest in urban responses. Other issues mentioned by one respondent each were: "drugs," "education," "youth development," "family planning service," "progressive planning for communities."

Table 11

Priorities of Issues on Which Cooperative Extension Should Provide Education as Seen by Respondents

Issues by number of times ranked (1) high, (2) med. (3) low.

Community Leaders (N=50)		County Officials (N=22)		Total (N=72)*	
High Priority					
Issue	No.	Issue	No.	Issue	No.
Welfare	29	Welfare	14	Welfare	85
Environmental Quality	26	Sanitary Land Fill	14	Environmental Quality	63
Industrial Development	20	Industrial Development	11	Industrial Development	52
New Government Services	19	Assessment	11	Sanitary Land Fill	46
Medium Priority					
Elderly	21	Environmental Quality	9	Elderly	64
Recreation	19	Family & Child	9	Recreation	46
Assessment	18	Elderly	8	Assessment	31
Industrial Development	17	Doctor Shortage	7	Industrial Development	30
Low Priority					
Family & Child	21	New Government Services	13	Family & Child	67
Tax Mapping	18	Recreation	12	Recreation	65
Doctor Shortage	17	Family & Child	10	Reorganization of Government	43
Recreation	16	Doctor Shortage	10	Doctor Shortage	31

*15 returns not usable, 5 omits. (Totals may be more than 72 since one respondent is in more than one group.)

Should Extension provide program? Two of every three respondents as shown in Table 12, felt it would be "very helpful" if Cooperative Extension conducted informational programs for citizens on programs proposed by county government and one of three thought it would be "somewhat helpful." One respondent indicated Extension should not conduct programs. There were no responses in the "of no help" category, although there were four omits.

Table 12

Public Information Through Extension on Programs Proposed by County Government

Response	Community Leaders		County Officials		Elected		Appointed		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very Helpful	37	66	12	58	22	59	8	53	58	63
Somewhat Helpful	18	32	12	33	12	32	6	40	30	33
Omits	1	2	3	8	3	8	1	7	4	4
Total	56	100	36	100	37	100	15	100	92	100

Research available through Extension. Eighty-five percent of the respondents indicated research findings from Cornell University should be made available to county officials and citizens through Cooperative Extension. Eleven percent were undecided on this point.

Role of Cornell University. An open ended question asking the respondents view of Cornell University as a state supported institution in public affairs education resulted in several categories shown in Table 13. The role indicated by the highest percentage of respondents (twenty percent) was serving as a "source of information." The next largest percentage indicated an "important role" but the role was not specifically stated. Active participation in public affairs programs was third highest. Four percent indicated "no role" or "limited."

Table 13

Role of Cornell University in Public Affairs
as Perceived by Respondents

Role	No.	%
"Source of information"	18	20
"Important role"	12	14
"Public affairs education program"	10	11
"Research"	8	9
"Not sure"	8	9
"Provide guidelines for local people"	4	4
"None" or "limited"	4	4
"Training"	3	3
"Coordinating"	3	3
Respondents not answering	22	23
Total	92	100

Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs. Questions number 17, 19, 20, 21, and 23 Part II were grouped together and weighted as described earlier. This resulted in a reading on the strength or degree of feeling (attitude) toward Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs.

Table 14 shows the degree of support for Cooperative Extension being involved in public affairs education. Respondents who were rural, community leaders, appointed officials and had lower educational levels expressed very slightly higher interest. The hypothesis that a higher degree of support for Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs will be expressed by respondents from rural areas, community leaders, appointed officials and those with a higher educational level tends to be only partially supported. The significant finding again is that very little

differences existed between groups and that a significantly positive attitude toward Cooperative Extension being involved in public affairs does exist.

Table 14

How Respondents View Involvement of Cooperative Extension in Public Affairs Education

Score of Questions 17, 19, 20, 21, 23 Part II.
Range: Total Score=12 to 64 Mean=.86 to 4.57

Group	Mean Score
Rural N=54	3.56
Urban N=37	3.52
Community Leader N=55	3.55
County Official N=36	3.54
Elected N=37	3.50
Appointed N=15	3.51
High School N=28	3.60
Some College N=20	3.53
College Graduate N=40	3.51
Total N=91	3.54

T-test showed no significant differences.

Respondent Characteristics

Time in county. A breakdown of the length of time respondents have lived in Cattaraugus County in Table 15 shows that seven out of ten have lived in the county more than thirty years and only fifteen percent less than ten years. This indicates most respondents were relatively long time residents.

Occupation. Table 16 shows the distribution of the respondents by occupation. The percentages indicate a fairly well balanced

representation of the various categories with professional and business being slightly larger.

Table 15

Length of Time Respondents Have Lived in Cattaraugus County

Years	No.	%
1 - 10	14	15
11 - 30	14	15
31 - 45	28	31
Over 45	35	38
Total	91	99*

*One omit

Table 16

Occupations of Respondents

Occupation	No.	%
Professional	17	17
Business	17	17
County Government	16	16
Farmer	10	11
Worker or Laborer in Business	8	10
Education	8	10
Media (Radio, Newspaper)	6	8
Other (Housewife, City)	10	11
Total	92	100

Public office experience. Public offices were held by sixty percent of the respondents as shown in Table 17. Seventeen of the twenty-five county legislators responded, twenty of the twenty-seven county department personnel who received questionnaires responded. The length of time in office shows the highest percentage had two to four years in office and seventy-five percent under six years.

Table 17

Public Offices and Time in Office

Office	No.	%	Time in Office (Regardless of Office Held)		
County Legislator	17	31	Time (Years)	No.	%
County Department	19	36	2 or Less	8	15
Town	10	19	2 to 4	24	44
City (Mayor, etc.)	5	9	5 to 6	9	16
Other (Public boards)	2	5	Over 6	14	25
Total	55	100	Total	55	100

Previous public offices held were primarily town (Justice of Peace, Supervisor, Assessor), forty-three percent of the forty-two who held positions previously. Another twenty-six percent had held office in a city, with remainder in villages, county or other public organization. Seventy-six percent had less than ten years experience with forty-three percent having five to ten years experience.

Community organizations. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents were active in one or more community organizations. Most frequently named were civic groups (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.), Chamber of Commerce (or Jay Cees), and religious groups.

Age. Table 18 shows numbers of respondents above and below forty years of age. Of the sixty-four percent over forty, the largest percent was in the 56 to 60 range and in the below 40 group, 36 to 40 was most common.

Table 18

Age of Respondents

Age	No.	%
Below 40	27	29
Above 40	64	70
Total	91*	99

*One omit

Educational Attainment

Years of schooling completed is grouped into high school, some college, and college graduate or higher. In the rural-urban group, thirty-nine percent fell into the high school category, while sixty-percent of the urban were college graduates. When the respondents were grouped as community leaders and county officials each had the highest percentage in the college graduate category. Forty percent of the elected officials had high school or less educational levels while the same percent of appointed officials were college graduates.

If the characteristics were put together to make the typical respondent, he would have tended to be over forty, a college graduate, lived in the county over thirty years and active in community organizations.

Comments. Twenty-nine respondents wrote comments about the survey, Extension involvement or other general related topics. Fifteen were interpreted as positive in nature, eight were negative and six

neutral. Representative comments of each area follow.

Positive

1) "I believe that any agency or movement that attempts to educate the electorate is performing a very worthwhile service and should be appreciated by officials and citizens alike."

2) "Am amazed at my own ignorance of county affairs."

3) --- "I think there is a big need for more and better ways to inform the public and get more people involved in county and local government."

Negative

1) "I would not like to see Extension become completely engrossed in public affairs as I believe it would be costly and perhaps a deviation from my interpretation of Extension goals. I will agree there is a gap someone should try to fill."

2) "Cooperative Extension should spend more time promoting the one big industry we have left in our county, AGRICULTURE."

Neutral

1) "When it comes to public interest in government, people tend to not care until the horse runs away. If the officials tend to do a reasonably good job, the public is more or less disinterested. If the public thinks a poor job is being done, they become interested, but often times lack the facts as to what really exists."

Summary. This chapter has presented the data from the questionnaires returned from ninety-two community leaders and county officials. The next chapter will look at the conclusions and implications of these findings.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The primary purposes of this study were:

1. To determine the opinions of community leaders and county officials in Cattaraugus County, New York, on the need for more information on county government for the county citizens and major issues of public concern.

2. To determine the opinions of community leader and county officials on Cooperative Extension being involved in public affairs educational program efforts.

3. To use the findings for Cooperative Extension to effectively develop a comprehensive continuing educational program jointly with the county officials and community leaders.

The review of literature provided information which served as a basis for the approach and development of this research. The readings provided support for the author's assumption that the general public understands very little about the operations of county government and the county officials themselves feel a need to learn more about functions of county government. County government, it seems, is probably the least understood of all governments. Through better understanding of its operations and purposes, perhaps citizens will increase their participation in the functions of county government.

A mail questionnaire was used to collect data from community leaders and county officials in Cattaraugus County. The questionnaire

was designed to collect opinions or attitudes concerning the following main points of how community leaders and county officials viewed:

1. the importance and complexity of county government.

2. the public knowledge of county government.

3. the involvement of Cooperative Extension in public affairs education program efforts.

4. the major problems and issues facing county government.

Types of questions used were closed and open ended. The closed questions were designed to give the respondents an opportunity to express their feelings on a scale which could then later be weighted to allow measurement of degree of respondents' attitude toward the subject. The open-ended questions were designed to collect in the respondent's own words his perception of various problems, issues and opportunities.

The instrument was pre-tested with representative groups in Niagara County, New York, and Boone County, Missouri. Also, other graduate students and University of Missouri, Columbia professors provided valuable assistance in its development.

Questionnaires were mailed in Cattaraugus County to fifty-two county officials and seventy-three community leaders, for a total of one hundred twenty-five potential respondents. Thirty-six county officials and fifty-six community leaders returned questionnaires. In addition, one was returned too late and one was not usable, for a total of ninety-four or a seventy-four percent return.

The respondents were classified and grouped to determine if differences existed which might be useful knowledge in program development. The groups were: community leader - county official; rural - urban; elected - appointed; education levels of high school - some college -

college graduate.

Conclusions

1. The most obvious result was that there was very little difference between the opinions or attitudes of the respondents regardless of the group in which they were classified for comparisons: community leader or county official; rural or urban; elected or appointed; or educational levels of high school, some college or college graduate.

2. There was a general positive attitude expressed toward the major areas of study: the importance of county government, public knowledge of county government, and Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs, indicating a general feeling of concern about the county's problems. This point was substantiated by side comments made by several respondents and the thoroughness and sincerity with which nearly every respondent completed the questionnaire.

The lack of support for the hypothesis stated in this light then, is most encouraging, indicating general support and few areas of reluctance to any educational effort on county government.

3. There is general agreement that county government is more important and complex today with problems more difficult to cope with.

4. The majority feel that the county government should have greater home rule powers.

5. The county officials themselves, both elected and appointed, feel they are not well enough informed on the operations and purposes of the various county departments.

6. Whether respondents feel that the tax base has been restricted or not is not clear, since a high percentage were undecided. Apparently it is a question which either needed clarification or the respondents

needed more information before making a judgement. No definite conclusion can be drawn.

7. It seems that some kind of training on their duties for newly elected or appointed officials would serve a useful purpose. The majority of the officials themselves feel this would be helpful to them.

8. The leaders and officials feel that citizens are not very well informed on problems faced by county government and feel that if the citizens were adequately informed, they would support county government's efforts to solve these problems.

9. The public does lack knowledge of county government operations and functions, and the leaders and officials feel it is important that the citizens should become better informed on this point.

Areas of county government the leaders and officials feel least understood are welfare, finances and the county legislature. Best understood areas were departments of highway, sheriff, and welfare. The appearance of welfare in both groups may indicate different interpretations of the question or different parts of the welfare program. It appears that welfare is, at least, a paradox which does need some attention.

10. Citizen participation. Conclusions on elected officials wanting more participation of citizens are as follows:

- a majority of community leaders feel that elected officials do not want more citizen participation.

- a majority of county officials; elected and appointed, feel that elected officials do want more citizen participation.

Conclusions on appointed officials wanting more participation

of citizens are as follows:

- a majority of community leaders, county officials and elected officials feel that appointed officials do not want more citizen participation.

- a majority of appointed officials feel they do want more citizen participation.

11. Major issues facing county government as perceived by the respondents include expending costs to meet demands, welfare, taxes and the operation and administration of county government as the top four. These may become important considerations for any educational efforts attempted.

12. The concern and interest of the leaders and officials responding was shown by their expression of willingness to participate in public information programs on county government.

13. Strong support was indicated for Cooperative Extension to provide educational programs on programs proposed by county government and for help in organizing efforts on a continuing educational program on county government.

14. The leaders and officials views of the top priority issues for any educational program were welfare, environmental quality, industrial development and sanitary land fill.

15. Lack of citizen participation may be due to lack of knowledge about county government and problems since both officials and leaders inferred this by indicating an informed citizen would support government's efforts in solving problems.

16. The role of Cornell University in public affairs education as viewed by the respondents was varied, but seemed to indicate that it is important for Cornell to have a role and to serve as a back-up

resource institution with research, information and guidelines for the local people.

Implications

This type of study could be viewed as exploratory in nature resulting in information that has varied implications for Cooperative Extension programming. It has provided a "starting point" or "benchmark" for any public affairs educational programs initiated by Cooperative Extension.

1. Perhaps the most encouraging finding with wide-sweeping implications is that a very high percentage of the community leaders and county officials feel strongly that there is a need for a public information program on county government. This feeling persists regardless of the residence, educational level, whether elected or appointed, and whether community leader or county official. With ninety-four leaders and officials taking time to fill out the questionnaire, and making additional comments, this indicates strong interest and concern. This, coupled with the fact that with little difference between groups on the need for more education, a program of this nature should result in strong support throughout the county and in the county government's offices.

2. Before Cooperative Extension embarks on a public affairs education program of this nature, it is important that the feelings and concerns of the leaders and decision-makers be known.

3. The study may have been educational in nature by stimulating thinking evidenced by the several side comments. This effect may persist for a time, implying a need to continually "sound out" leaders and officials.

4. This study may be of high interest to county government

officials themselves to reveal what leaders in the county feel about government and its problems. The results may be useful in guiding future approaches to problems.

5. The complexity of the issues raised seem to imply a continuing educational program with a gradual development of different phases to be effective in helping the public understand better county government and the problems it faces.

6. The leaders and officials who responded to this study should be deeply involved in the development, planning and implementation of a program for the public.

7. An educational program relating to county government could have a two-pronged approach as implied by the findings. One - a public information program dealing with problems facing county government (actually facing all county residents) and two - a public educational program on county government to better inform county citizens on the purposes, functions and operations of all phases of county government.

Another phase of the program which could be developed is one of helping government officials become more knowledgeable of the government's departments and their operations along with training for new officials.

Recommendations

This study has resulted in the author's following recommendations:

1. This study could be done again in Cattaraugus County in five years to measure changes in opinions and perception of priority issues.

2. This study could be used by other counties with appropriate modification, to determine interest and priorities of current issues.

3. The interview method of obtaining the data would be preferred to the mail questionnaire if time and resources permit.

4. Cooperative Extension at the county level and state level should consider allocating time and resources for the development, planning and implementation of a public affairs program on county government and to study the feasibility of some kind of training for newly elected or appointed county government officials.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Program Suggestions

It would be presumptuous of the author to attempt to develop an educational program based on these findings without involving the community leaders, county officials, Cooperative Extension and Cornell University personnel. However, this section contains some suggestions or possibilities for consideration in the development of such a program.

1. This study has identified key leadership in Cattaraugus County. It would be a mistake if they were not involved in developing and implementing any educational program on county government. They are concerned citizens and serious about doing something about this problem of lack of citizen participation. Their opinions and guidance would be extremely valuable. A steering committee for a public affairs program should have as members as many of these people as feasible.

2. The program appears to be one that could operate at several levels. At the state level there may be things the Office of Local Government could provide. Cornell University specialists could assist with overall program guidance and coordination of resources available, by conducting appropriate research on local issues as resources permit, providing guidelines for local county Extension and government offices, and acting as a source of information on related problems as they develop.

The county level would involve the county government legislators, department heads, Cooperative Extension leadership and staff, leaders from around the county and other organizations covering portions of the county. Radio and newspapers could provide a considerable assistance. Cooperation, ideas, planning, participation in the program would be responsibilities of these groups.

The local level, including village, town, or city governments could cooperate in the program with possible side benefits of better understanding of their governments resulting. Also, at this level, civic clubs, religious organizations, chambers of commerce, farm groups and others could actively participate by fostering their own programs and having government officials or others on their programs.

3. The pace of today's living and faster maturing of our youth results in many of them having responsibilities sometimes before they are ready. A good understanding of county government is needed by our youth to help make the adjustment to adulthood. It seems reasonable to encourage a stronger emphasis on learning about county government in our county school systems.

4. The constant changes in programs at all levels of government create misunderstanding among the elderly citizens of the county. There is a need to help these people know how changes affect them; their benefits, taxes, etc., and ensure a "voice" in government for them. Any program should include the elderly citizens and their groups as a special audience.

5. The program should be a continuing one that is comprehensive in nature with long term and short term goals. A two-pronged approach should be considered with emphasis on problems facing county government and increasing the public's knowledge of county government. Another

area that could possibly be considered as time passes is that of public education of programs proposed by county government. The program should set objectives to accomplish by perhaps four years time, with yearly activities and goals outlined to accomplish these. Proper consideration of audience, timing, materials, activities and most important, the use of resources and time committment of county officials and Extension personnel should be considered.

a. Program suggestions for county government operations. The program on county government, as indicated by the study results, should be aimed at improving citizens' knowledge of the purposes and functions of county departments including emphasis on social services (welfare), treasurer (finances) and the structure and operations of the county legislature.

Part of this phase of the program might consider developing effective periodic reporting techniques by the various county offices.

Another phase could involve county officials heavily in developing better understanding of the various departments through such things as department handbooks, visits to offices and better communication procedures.

b. Program suggestion for issues facing county government. The part of the two-pronged program should include priority issues as identified in this study. These include welfare, environmental quality, industrial development, and sanitary land fill as highest priority. Other areas include the interpretation of tax base, assessment, and tax sources and allocation, administration and organization of county government including a possible new structure, greater implications of home rule and problems of the elderly.

6. A program of this magnitude should be balanced with Cooperative

Extension's goals, on-going programs, resources, personnel and priorities, if it is to be effective. The Cooperative Extension Board of Directors will need to consider these findings.

7. Some parts of the research findings should and will be made public. The newspapers, radio, Cooperative Extension News and other methods will be used.

Final Remarks

One of the truly gratifying results of this study, to the author, is that large differences do not exist between the various groupings of respondents as hypothesized, but rather the apparent existance of a general positive attitude toward this study, its purposes, and each of the concerns being studied.

This encouragement and common recognition of a countywide problem with its accompanying educational opportunities represents a challenge for Cattaraugus County Cooperative Extension and the Cattaraugus County Legislature.

The results of any efforts coming from this study may not be known for a few years. At that time, any accomplishments may be visible through increased citizen participation in an effective county government.

The challenge to those involved in a public affairs program can best be stated in a quotation from one of the Cattaraugus County respondents:

> The major factor in the effectiveness of a program by Extension is the sincerity and understanding of the people who administer such a program. We are dealing with human wants, and needs and the faith of the public is essential in conducting such programs.

November 19, 1971

TO: County Government Officials and Community Leaders

I am presently studying in the Graduate School of the University of Missouri, and am working on a research project that requires your assistance.

Your concern for county issues and problems is obvious from your present activities. The present day issues facing a county are complex and fast changing. Citizen participation is influenced by these conditions.

I need your opinions, ideas, and comments on public knowledge of county government and Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs education. My research project is "A Study of County Government Officials and Community Leaders Opinions on Public Information on County Government in Cattaraugus County."

Next week you will receive a questionnaire from me, asking for your comments. Since you are busy, it is designed to be quick to answer, taking 15-20 minutes of your time.

Your contribution is needed to make the research meaningful. I am looking forward to hearing from you in the next few weeks.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,
Roger W. Lord

Roger W. Lord
#171 Woodstock Trailer Park
Columbia, Missouri 65201

November 29, 1971

TO: COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Cattaraugus County is undergoing changes and growth that effect every citizen. The government of the county has the major responsibility for directing these changes in the best interests of the county citizens.

Because of your position and of your interest in our county's future, your opinions and comments are vital to this research study.

Will you please assure the success of this study by taking 15-20 minutes now to complete the questionnaire? Please return it in the self-addressed envelope.

For clarity, we are including an explanation of terms: County Government, as used in the questionnaire, includes the County Legislature and all the departments which carry on county functions, such as highway, treasurer, health, etc. Cooperative Extension is a tax supported (Federal, State and County funds) organization located at the Extension Center in Ellicottville, which carries on informal education with its professional staff for people in the county. All counties in New York State have an office with Cornell University providing backup for resources, research, and administration.

If you wish to receive a copy of the report of this research, put your name and address on the enclosed card and return it to me.

All individual information will be kept confidential.

I am anxious to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Roger W. Lord

Roger W. Lord
#171 Woodstock Trailer Park
Columbia, Missouri 65201

A STUDY OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

OPINIONS ON PUBLIC INFORMATION ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

QUESTIONNAIRE

TO: County Officials and Community Leaders in Cattaraugus County.

THIS INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL.

Please return by December 15 in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Roger W. Lord
Woodstock Trailer Park #171
Columbia, Missouri 65201

(Note - Unless otherwise explained numbers are percent of total N=92)

1. Do you believe that the function of county government is as important today as it was 25 years ago?

97 Yes.
2 No.
1 Undecided.

2. Economic, social, or technological problems faced by county government are more difficult to cope with now than in the past.

72 Strongly agree.
26 Agree.
1 Undecided.
1 Disagree.
0 Strongly disagree.

What would be an example of a problem that is more difficult to cope with today than in the past? Welfare - 50 %, Sewage & Waste - 17 %, New Resources - 10 %, Taxes - 4 %, Highways - 3 % others (Drugs, labor) - 16 %, 10 % omits

3. Would it be helpful for newly elected or appointed officials to receive training for their duties?

80 Yes.
4 No.
15 Undecided.

4. Have the Federal and State governments unduly restricted the tax base available to county government?

39 Yes.
23 No.
36 Undecided.
2 omit

Total (N = 33)

Comments: "Use up tax base = 33 %, Tax too high - 19 %, mandates - 16 %, Tax Exempt Property - 11 %, None - 11 %.

5. Should county government have greater home rule powers?

80 Yes.
10 No.
9 Undecided.
1 omit

6. In regard to their knowledge of each others purposes and functions, the personnel of the various departments of county government are, in your opinion

4 very well informed.
17 well informed.
62 moderately informed.
13 ill informed.
0 uninformed.
3 omit

7. In regard to their knowledge of operations of each of the county departments, county legislators are, in your opinion

2 very well informed.
15 well informed.
60 moderately informed.
20 ill informed.
3 uninformed.

8. In regard to problems faced by county government, it has been your experience that local citizens are

0 very well informed.
2 well informed.
32 moderately informed.
52 ill informed.
14 uninformed.

9. It is important that local citizens be well informed on the operation of county government.

59 Strongly agree.
40 Agree.
1 Undecided.
0 Disagree.
0 Strongly disagree.

10. Elected county government officials generally want more participation of local citizens in public affairs.

13 Strongly agree.
40 Agree.
18 Undecided.
25 Disagree.
2 Strongly disagree.
1 omit

11. Appointed county government officials generally want more participation of local citizens in public affairs.

3 Strongly agree.
32 Agree.
36 Undecided.
25 Disagree.
3 Strongly disagree.
1 omit

12. Local citizens have an adequate knowledge of the organization, purpose and function of the various county departments and offices.

0 Strongly agree.
5 Agree.
4 Undecided.
75 Disagree.
15 Strongly disagree.

State the area of county government which you feel is least understood.

Welfare - 37%, Finances - 12%, Co. Legislature - 10%, Assessment - 3% Planning - 3%, Tax Rate - 3%, Health - 2%, Judicial - 1%, Clerk - 1% omits - 27%.

State the area of county government which you feel is best understood.

Highway - 16%, Sheriff - 11%, Welfare - 8%, Legislature - 7% Clerk - 3%, Budget - 3%, Elections - 3%, Health - 2%, Veterans - 1% omits - 46%.

13. The citizen who is adequately informed on problems faced by the county government will generally support county government's efforts to solve problems.

25 Strongly agree.
63 Agree.
5 Undecided.
5 Disagree.
0 Strongly disagree.
1 omit

14. In your opinion, what are the current major issues facing county government today? Expanding Costs - 22%, Welfare - 22%, Taxes - 18% Administration - 12%, Home Rule - 7%, Ecology - 4%, Waste Disposal - 4%, others (Courthouse, employment, pollution) - 4% omits - 5%

15. If you had the opportunity, would you be willing to participate in a public information program?

72 Yes.
13 No.
14 Undecided.
1 omit

If yes, what types of activities would interest you most?

5 A. Luncheons.
21 B. Evening meetings.
24 C. Occasional day meetings such as forums or seminars.
8 D. Radio programs.
0 E. T.V. programs.
8 F. Writing articles for newspapers.
11 G. Other. (explain) ALL

24 omit

The next few questions are concerned with Cooperative Extension and Cornell University. Cooperative Extension is responsible for conducting informational educational programs for all people in Cattaraugus County. The professional staff help local people deal with their problems through the use of unbiased information. Cornell University is the "mother" institution of Cooperative Extension, providing research based information and specialized resource back up.

16. Have you participated in a public affairs workshop, conference, or course conducted by Cornell University?

37 Yes.
63 No.

If yes, was it in Cattaraugus County?

26 Yes.
11 No.

17. Having Cooperative Extension help to organize efforts by county government, county departments, or civic groups in a continuing educational program on county government would be helpful for citizens.

36 Strongly agree.
51 Agree.
11 Undecided.
2 Disagree.
0 Strongly disagree.
5 omit

18. In your opinion, on which of the following issues facing county government should Cooperative Extension provide public educational information? (Place a 1 by those with a high priority, a 2 by those with moderate priority, and a 3 by those with low priority.)
(BASED ON TOTAL N = 92 USABLE RESPONSES)

2 New or expanded county government services.
3 Family and child relationship.
1 Sanitary land fill proposals.
1 Environmental quality.
3 Reorganization of county or local governments.
2 Assessment of properties.
2 Care for the elderly.
1 Industrial development.
1 Public welfare.
2 Recreational development.
3 Tax mapping.
3 Doctor shortage.
___ Others. Leech; Drugs, Education, Youth Development Family Planning Service, Progressive planning for communities.
20 omits

19. Informational programs conducted by Cooperative Extension for local citizens on programs proposed by county government would be

63 very helpful.
33 somewhat helpful.
0 of no help.
4 omits

20. In regard to your knowledge of Cooperative Extension's purpose and activities, you are

5 very well informed.
28 well informed.
55 moderately informed.
10 ill informed.
0 uninformed.
1 omit

21. If research is done by Cornell University on community problems, should the findings be made available to county officials and citizens through Cooperative Extension?

85 Yes.
2 No.
11 Undecided.
2 omit

22. What role do you think a state supported institution like Cornell University should have in public affairs education? Source of Information 24%, Important - 15%, Public Affairs Program - 11%, Not Sure - 11%, Research - 9%, Training, Coordination, Guidelines - 6% ea, No Role - 4%
23 % omits

23. Here are statements that have been made about public education on county government and Cooperative Extension involvement in public affairs. Please check (✓) the column which best describes your feelings about each statement.

Public Knowledge of County Government PART I	omit	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. "wastes everyone's time."	2	0	3	3	55	36
2. "will increase citizen participation."	2	12	67	13	5	0
3. "aids public discussion."	2	17	75	4	1	0
4. "only helps a few people."	2	4	22	7	55	10
5. "increases democratic processes."	2	20	62	13	3	0
6. "generates unrest."	2	1	9	16	60	12
7. "serves no useful purpose."	2	0	1	2	62	33
8. "creates better understanding."	2	20	72	2	4	0
9. "leads to public dissatisfaction."	2	0	7	13	71	8
10. "increases opportunity to be heard."	1	13	76	2	8	0
Involvement in Public Affairs by Cooperative Extension PART II						
1. "won't help solve community problems."	1	1	7	15	64	12
2. "will create more public interest."	1	8	76	9	5	1
3. "is duplicating existing efforts."	2	1	9	26	53	9
4. "helps some county residents."	1	1	83	4	9	2
5. "helps public understanding of issues."	2	10	79	7	2	0
6. "may only confuse things."	1	0	8	9	72	11
7. "is a waste of tax money."	1	3	7	12	62	15
8. "could provide more discussion opportunities."	1	9	80	7	3	0
9. "is meddling where it doesn't belong."	1	1	5	11	66	15
10. "could help county government."	1	19	71	8	3	0

UNDER 30 YEARS = 30 omit=1

24. How long have you lived in Cattaraugus County? OVER 30 YEARS = 69 years.

25. What is your present occupation? (No.) Prof - 17, Business - 17, Co. Govnt - 16, Laborer - 10, Education - 10, Media - 8, Farm 11, other - 11.

26. Do you hold a public office? (elected or appointed)

61 Yes.
39 No.

If yes, what office? (No.) Co Leg. - 17 TOWN - 10 other - 2
Co. Dept. - 19 City - 5 Total - 55

How long? (No.) Less than 2 = 8 5-6 = 9
2-4 = 24 Over 6 = 14

Previous public service positions held. (No.) TOWN = 18, City = 11
Village, County etc = 13, Total = 42

How long? (No.) Less than 4 years = 14, 5-15 years = 27, over 15 = 1

27. Are you a member of any community organization?

78 Yes.
16 No.
5 omit

(TOTAL N = 62)
If yes, list major ones. civic - 24 %, chamber of commerce - 20%
Agric - 14 %, religious - 8 %, other - 34%

28. What is your age? Less than 40 = 27 or 29 %
More than 40 = 64 or 70 % 1 omit

29. What is the highest grade you have completed in school? Circle one.

omit = 3

Grade School	High School	College
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	9 10 11 12	1 2 3 4 5 6
32 %		22 % more than 6 43 %

30. As a county official or community leader you can make any comments you care to in the space below relating to the information in this study. Remember, this information is confidential.

HAVE YOU ANSWERED ALL QUESTIONS?

If you would like to receive a copy of the report of this research, please write your name and address on the separate card provided.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Please return by December 15 in the enclosed envelope.

December 15, 1971

TO: CATTARAUGUS COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Before you are caught in the holiday rush, please.....

If you have not returned the questionnaire on "Public Information on County Government" please take 15-20 minutes to fill it out today. This study may have implications for our county government's future operations.

Many of the returns so far have some surprising and interesting comments. Your opinions are valued and needed.

I have enclosed another questionnaire in case you have mislaid the first one.

When complete, please mail it to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. (Note) The enclosed card may be mailed seperately.

Thank you for your cooperation. We hope you and your family will have a Happy Holiday Season!

Sincerely,

Roger W. Lord

Roger W. Lord
#171 Woodstock Trailer Park
Columbia, Missouri 65201

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